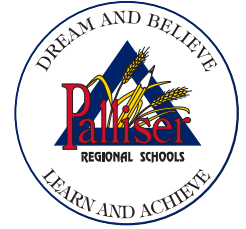


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

May 13, 2014



Board visits Calgary Christian Secondary

The Board of Trustees held its regular monthly meeting at Calgary Christian Secondary School in Calgary on May 13, 2014. This was the last of four meetings trustees held this year in schools across the division. Superintendent Kevin Gietz and trustees Debbie Laturnus and Robert Strauss were absent from the meeting.

Students of Calgary Christian Secondary shared a number of treats with the trustees during the day, starting with a performance by the senior band, pastries created by students in a Foods class, and a shadow screen presentation by drama students.

Calgary Christian Secondary serves just over 400 students from Grades 7-12.

Kevin Garinger served as acting superintendent in the superintendent's absence. Gietz was attending workshops and meetings on international student programs.

Palliser's latest Pillar shows great results as well as impact of June flood

The board received the division's latest Accountability Pillar summary, issued by Alberta Education. Palliser's latest pillar continues to show results impacted by the June 2013 flooding in southern Alberta. Many of Palliser's students were excused from writing provincial exams as a result of the flood. The department has suppressed some of this data because of the reduction in participation in some of the exams. Next year, the data should return to normal. Palliser's achievement and satisfaction rates from stakeholders continue to be higher than provincial average and excellent across the board. The division's latest pillar summary is online at <http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/download/12376>

Trustees not supportive of wellness accounts being added to benefits plan

Trustees discussed whether they'd support the creation of wellness accounts by Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP). The board was asked to submit its input to the Alberta School Boards Association. ASEBP was created by ASBA and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Trustees said they would not support the creation of wellness accounts because ASEBP already offers health spending



Students at Calgary Christian Secondary School performed music and drama for the Palliser board and baked treats for them, too.

accounts. The introduction of a new possible benefit would add more costs to benefits packages offered to employees by school boards. The board directed that opinion be shared with ASBA.

Palliser committee will provide input on province's results-based budgeting

The Board reviewed a survey sent to school jurisdictions by Deputy Minister of Education Greg Bass. The 11-question survey seeks input on results based budgeting. The Board directed a committee of trustees and administrators be created to review the survey and provide input on Palliser's behalf by May 30.

School review team visits Milo School

The board welcomed Co-ordinating Principal of School Development Cynthia Gietz to the meeting to present the results of a school review of Milo School.

Milo School serves about 60 students from Grades 1-9. A private preschool program also operates in the building.

A review team of Central Office administrators and a principal of another Palliser school visited Milo School on Jan. 16, 2014 to view the school facilities, interview staff and conduct focus group meetings with students, parents and support staff. As part of the review, online surveys are conducted of students, teachers and parents/guardians. Due to the small staff, some survey results were not included in the report to ensure no individual could be identified.

The data collected was analysed for themes to identify areas of strength and potential areas for improvement.

Gietz said areas of strength include that students get individual help when they need it and students enjoy activities offered by the school including the ski trip.

Areas for refinement or strengthening include a desire for even more athletic opportunities; Grade 7-9 students identified a desire for teaching in ways they learn; and more communication about what's happening at school.

The results of the review are shared with Principal Clarice Gilbert and staff who can then celebrate strengths and formulate an action plan for improvement.

Palliser continues to deepen staff accountability processes

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger updated the board on progress being made by a Palliser committee that's been creating new detailed job descriptions for school support staff. As part of the change, learning assistants in Palliser will be referred to as educational assistants and school secretaries will be administrative assistants. Their job descriptions will eventually be adopted as administrative procedures and will be aligned with the school principal's roles. Garinger said Palliser alignment of roles now extends from the board of trustees, to the superintendents, to directors, supervisors, Central Office support staff, principals and school support staff. Garinger said Terry Gunderson, a consultant with Alberta School Boards Association who has promoted this alignment and accountability process, has expressed amazement at the work Palliser has done. Gunderson describes the evaluation process as 90 per cent affirmation and 10 per cent growth.

Garinger recommended the board consider submitting a presentation proposal to the National Congress on Rural Education on this accountability effort. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said as

new regional collaboration service delivery groups work on their own governance processes, they've begun looking at this same evaluation model for managers.

Board appoints two directors

The board passed two motions approving the hiring of Cynthia Gietz as director of learning and Michael Nightingale as director of human resources. Both appointments take effect for the 2014-2015 school year. The board took over the hiring process for both director level positions after Superintendent Kevin Gietz declared a conflict and removed himself from the process. Kevin and Cynthia Gietz are married.

Associate Superintendent (HR) Kevin Garinger bids farewell

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger thanked the board for its vision and support over his seven years in Palliser. Garinger attended his final Palliser board meeting before assuming the role as CEO/Director of Horizon School Division in Saskatchewan.



Kevin Garinger

"As I've watched and been part of this board, I've watched you make decisions that really kept kids at the centre of what you've done," he said. "I leave with a heavy heart and with some excitement as well as I take on a new challenge."

Chair Colleen Deitz thanked Garinger for carrying out the board's vision throughout his time in Palliser.

Garinger assumes his new role May 26.

Board denies motion to build bus shelter

The board considered a request to build a bus shelter in the Fairview area of Lethbridge County. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin said the original request from residents was made to the county office in November 2013, but was not forwarded to Palliser.

The board was told the cost of a bus shelter could be \$10,000 to \$15,000 to build with additional costs to maintain it. Palliser has not created any other bus stops in the division.

A motion to create the shelter in Fairview, a subdivision bordering the City of Lethbridge, was defeated due to budget considerations.

Division calendar set for 2015-16

The board considered feedback collected from school communities to a draft division calendar for the 2015-2016

school year. In recent years, the board has tried to approve its calendar more than a year in advance to support families trying to plan their holidays.

The board approved the divisional calendar for 2015-2016. The calendar will be posted on Palliser's website and shared with school administrators who can then prepare their own school-based calendars for the year. The division calendar establishes start and end dates for school, Christmas break and division-wide professional development days that are common to every school. Individual school calendars will have their own unique site-based PD days, spring or Easter breaks and other events specific to the school.

A copy of the 2015-16 calendar can be found online at <http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/schools/school-calendar-information>

Board continues to review, approve school calendars for next year

Schools continued to submit their calendars for 2014-2015 for board approval. The board reviewed minutes of instruction and the time being allowed for breaks between classes, recesses and lunch to ensure students have time they need for transitions and play. Calendars for Kate Andrews High School, R.I. Baker Middle School, Sunnyside School, Dorothy Dalgliesh School, Picture Butte Outreach and Picture Butte High School, Noble Central, Barons School, Carmangay Outreach, Arrowwood Community School, Milo School, Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary Christian Elementary and Secondary, and all 17 Hutterite Colony schools were approved. School calendars are to be posted on school websites once approved.

Palliser will buy new buses as planned

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin updated the board on a bus tender process that closed April 25. The Bus Centre (Thomas Built Buses) was the least expensive option for three 70- to 72-passenger buses. Backlin asked whether the board would prefer to defer bus purchases in light of a tight budget for 2014-15. Trustees discussed the need to maintain a program of renewal of its bus fleet and that money for the purchases was already planned in the budget. The board directed administration to continue with the bus purchases as planned. Each bus costs about \$90,000.

Locally developed courses approved

The board approved the use of several more locally developed courses in Palliser schools. The approvals include: Abnormal Psychology 35-3, developed by Pembina Hills Regional Division; Forensic Science Studies 25-3 and 35-3, Beginner Music, Choral 15-5, and Speech and Debate

15-3, all from Edmonton Public; and Religions of the World 35-3 and 35-5 from Edmonton Catholic.

Dual credit opportunity promoted to Palliser students

Palliser students have an opportunity earn high school credit while working their way toward a Health Care Aide certificate from Lethbridge College.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin said any student in the south with an interest in working in the health sector may be interested in the program. Over the course of their Grade 11-12 years, students can earn 25 high school credits while completing the college certificate course. Palliser receives funding for seven of the 25 credits, with the college receiving funding for the other 18 credits. Students participate in lab programs at the college campus and complete a practicum in a health care setting. English 10 is a requirement of participation in the program, starting in September 2014. There are eight spots available to students in Palliser.

Staff survey finds support for final division-wide PD day

Palliser's final division-wide collaboration day for teachers was considered a hit. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said a survey of staff who attended the professional learning day found 89 per cent agreed that guest speaker David Booth was relevant and engaging. Booth is a leading expert in teaching literacy. Eighty-one per cent of respondents also said despite having fewer meetings this year than expected, their collaboration group has had a positive impact on student learning this year. Normally, Palliser's teachers work in small learning groups that meet four times a year. This year, two of the dates were cancelled due to extreme winter driving conditions.

New capital plan identifies space at Barons School as top priority

The board approved a new three-year capital plan that establishes a new top priority for any future capital development.

Topping the list of the 2014-15 through 2016-2017 capital plan is Barons/Carmangay schools. The Barons School is full and does not have any barrier-free classrooms or washrooms. One option may be modernization of Barons, a historic, multi-storey brick building, or increasing use of Carmangay School which does not have any barrier issues. Carmangay already serves as an extension of Barons with students from the region's Low German-speaking Mennonite community attending early learning, kindergarten through Grade 6 in Barons, then attending

Grade 7 through 12 at Carmangay. The high school in Carmangay is an outreach program that offers students flexibility in scheduling. Student population at the schools has increased 16 per cent since 2011-2012.

Barons/Carmangay takes the top priority spot from Noble Central School, which has now been approved for modernization.

Priority No. 2 on the list is a “mini-modernization” of Huntsville School in Iron Springs. The basement in the original wing has water problems and is constantly monitored for mold issues. A modernization would eliminate the basement. The school serves early learning, kindergarten through Grade 9.

Third on the priority list is Coalhurst High School, also for a mini-modernization. The school’s plumbing system is nearing the end of its lifecycle and could be upgraded in a modernization of the office area and high school wing. The school serves Grades 7-12,

Kate Andrews High School modernization was identified as a fourth priority. Continued growth already being experienced at Jennie Emery Elementary in Coaldale will eventually mean larger student numbers at KAHS.

The fifth priority is a gym upgrade at Champion School.

Report on student services finds change in service model was good for students

An analysis of Palliser results and staffing between 2003 and 2013 shows an improvement in student results coincided with a shift in support services for students with special needs.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard and Director of Learning Laurie Wilson presented an annual report on student services in Palliser, showing a significant increase in academic results in Grades 3, 6 and 9, between 2003 and 2013. In that period, learning support teacher hours were modified to focus on students who have severe needs. Learning assistant hours were also reduced and refocused on students with special needs. Classroom teachers assumed greater responsibility for these students, Wilson said. The change in service model, coupled with Palliser’s assessment for learning focus, more recently a division literacy initiative and principals’ focus on instructional supervision has improved student achievement, she said.

In 2013-14, Palliser has 241 students with severe needs, and nearly 400 others with other identified codes.

Rivard said highlights this school year include improvements in 15 of 16 measures, including stakeholder

satisfaction with Palliser’s safe and caring learning environments, education quality, citizenship and school improvement efforts.

Wilson said Palliser’s academic wrap-around service also supports student success. What started as a pilot project last year is now the “favourite thing I do in my job,” Wilson said. Ten schools participated in academic wrap-arounds this year, with principals and teachers referring 29 students to a team of resource people from Central Office. All but one has reported increased learning results. Palliser’s technology integration specialist, literacy experts and the classroom teacher focus on a student who may be struggling or who may be high achieving but need more challenge. The team suggests strategies that are then implemented and reviewed. The team has found strategies implemented for one student often are helpful to others in the classroom.

“The domino effect has been so impressive,” Wilson said. “At the high school level, we had two teachers completely change their practice after working with their literacy coaches.”

Palliser also offers a collaborative practice model that brings together a team to observe, discuss and brainstorm strategies to assist students with difficulties in speech or language, sensory, fine or gross motor skills or behaviour, focus or attention issues. Three schools have participated and the team consists of the school principal, classroom teacher, learning support teacher (if one is involved), and a family school liaison counsellor. Depending on the student, a speech language pathologist, occupation or physical therapist and behaviour consultant may also be involved. This year, 31 students were referred to the team, with strategies developed for them often being helpful to other students in the classroom.

This year, four Palliser employees became certified trainers in Supporting Individuals Through Valued Attachments (SIVA). They have trained 87 other employees in Palliser and have plans to train bus drivers in Fall 2014. SIVA promotes specialized safety management based on trust relationships between caregivers and individuals with special needs or volatile behaviours.

Other supports for students include Family School Liaison Counsellors logged nearly 4,160 one-on-one appointments with students.

Four career and academic counsellors across the division helped more than 300 students applying for scholarships, nearly 450 students in applying or registering for postsecondary and nearly 900 students with career planning assistance.

The next meeting of the board will begin at 9 a.m., June 10 in Lethbridge.